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SUBJECT: Austria: Interior Minister-Designate Maria Fekter

[¶1.](#) The conservative OVP Executive Board decided June 27 to replace outgoing Interior Minister Guenter Platter with Federal Ombudswoman Maria Fekter. Platter will become governor of Tyrol province. Fekter will be sworn in July 8.
Fekter Bio

[¶2.](#) Maria Fekter was born in February 1956, in Attnang-Puchheim. Fekter has a law degree from Linz University. She was a member of parliament for the OVP until July 2007, when she became federal ombudswoman. From 1990 to 1994 she was State Secretary in the Economics Ministry. As MP, she was also parliamentary justice spokeswoman for the OVP. Before her political career, she managed her family's cement factory in Upper Austria.

[¶3.](#) Fekter is viewed as a sharp-tongued expert on justice issues who is known for her conservative hardliner positions on matters such as the deportation of criminal illegal aliens and the legalization of homosexual partnerships. Following her defeat (by one vote) to Michael Spindlegger in the OVP's nomination to the position of Vice-President of parliament in 2006, Fekter became head of the OVP's team on the 2006/2007 investigative committee on the purchase of Eurofighter interceptors for the Austrian armed forces, where she proved to be an intense, but extremely well-prepared advocate of the purchase. Fekter is married and has an adult daughter.

First Statement

[¶4.](#) In her first statement following the news of her appointment, Fekter said her policy on immigration/integration issues will be based on the rule of law. She also emphasized her commitment to conservative values as well as pragmatism, adding that she was not afraid of conflicts or hard work.

SPO Reaction

[¶5.](#) Commenting on Fekter's nomination, representatives from the OVP's senior coalition partner SPO expressed hope for good cooperation. Justice Minister Maria Berger pointed to important pending projects such as the establishment of an anti-corruption authority and of a data base on criminals who committed sexual crimes. Social Affairs Minister Erwin Buchinger called for a clear reversal of the OVP's policy on asylum.

KILNER#